

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A hinge apparatus for a vehicle floor system, comprising:

an elongated, planar bridge member, comprising opposite first and second edge portions and a surface  
5 extending between the first and second edge portions; and

opposite first and second hinge members, each pivotally connected to a respective one of the first and second edge portions of the bridge member, wherein each hinge member comprises a base member and a planar upper  
10 panel extending outwardly from the base member, wherein each hinge member is movable between a first position and a second position, and wherein the base members of the hinge members are in adjacent, contacting relationship when the first and second hinge members are both in the  
15 first position.

2. The hinge apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the upper panel of each hinge member comprises opposite first and second surfaces, and wherein the first surface of <sup>the</sup> a hinge member is substantially flush with the bridge  
5 member surface when the hinge member is in the first position.

3. The hinge apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the base members of the first and second hinge members interlock with each other when the first and second hinge members are both in the first position.

4. The hinge apparatus of Claim 1, wherein each hinge member comprises a lower panel that extends outwardly from the base member in spaced-apart, opposing relationship with the upper panel, and wherein the upper  
5 and lower panels of each hinge member are configured to

removably secure a vehicle floor panel therebetween.

5. The hinge apparatus of Claim 2, wherein the second surface of each upper panel comprises one or more projections that facilitate securing a vehicle floor panel to the upper panel.

6. The hinge apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the lower panel of each hinge member comprises opposite first and second surfaces, and wherein the first surface of each lower panel comprises one or more projections that facilitate securing a vehicle floor panel to the lower panel.

7. The hinge apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the lower panels of the hinge members are substantially coplanar when both hinge members are in respective first positions.

8. The hinge apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the upper panel of each hinge member comprises a tapered free end.

9. The hinge apparatus of Claim 4, wherein the lower panel of each hinge member comprises a tapered free end.

10. The hinge apparatus of Claim 1, wherein each hinge member is pivotally attached to <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ respective bridge member edge portion via a web of material having a thickness of less than about 1 millimeter (mm).

11. The hinge apparatus of Claim 4, wherein each hinge member is pivotally attached to <sup>the</sup> ~~a~~ respective bridge member edge portion via a web of material having a thickness of less than about 1 millimeter (mm).

12. The hinge apparatus of Claim 1, wherein the upper panel of each hinge member is substantially coplanar with the bridge member when in the first position, and wherein the upper panel of each hinge member is transverse to the bridge member when in the second position.

13. A vehicle floor system, comprising:  
a hinge apparatus, comprising:  
an elongated, planar bridge member,  
comprising opposite first and second edge  
portions and a surface; and  
opposite first and second hinge members,  
each pivotally connected to a respective one of  
the first and second edge portions of the  
bridge member, wherein each hinge member  
comprises:

a base member; and  
a planar upper panel extending  
outwardly from the base member, wherein  
each upper panel comprises opposite first  
and second surfaces;  
wherein each hinge member is movable  
between a first position and a second  
position, and wherein the base members of  
the hinge members are in adjacent,  
contacting relationship when the first and  
second hinge members are both in the first  
position;

a pair of floor panels, each secured to the  
second surface of a respective one of the hinge member  
upper panels; and  
a floor covering material supported by the  
floor panels, by the first surface of each upper panel,  
and by the bridge member surface.

14. The vehicle floor system of Claim 13,  
wherein the floor covering material comprises carpet.

15. The vehicle floor system of Claim 14,  
wherein the carpet comprises a pile having a dimension  
and wherein a width of the bridge member between the  
first and second edge portions is at least twice the pile  
dimension.

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16. The vehicle floor system of Claim 14,  
wherein the carpet comprises a pile having a compressed  
dimension and wherein a width of the bridge member  
between the first and second edge portions is at least  
twice the pile compressed dimension.

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17. The vehicle floor system of Claim 13,  
wherein the upper panel first surface of a hinge member  
is substantially flush with the bridge member surface  
when the hinge member is in the first position.

18. The vehicle floor system of Claim 13,  
wherein the base members of the hinge members interlock  
with each other when the first and second hinge members  
are both in the first position.

19. The vehicle floor system of Claim 13,  
wherein each hinge member comprises a lower panel that  
extends outwardly from the base member in spaced-apart,  
opposing relationship with the upper panel, and wherein  
the upper and lower panels of each hinge member are  
configured to removably secure a respective one of the  
floor panels therebetween.

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20. The vehicle floor system of Claim 13,  
wherein the second surface of each upper panel comprises  
one or more projections that facilitate securing a

floor panel to the upper panel.

21. The vehicle floor system of Claim 19,  
wherein the lower panel of each hinge member comprises  
opposite first and second surfaces, and wherein the first  
surface of each lower panel comprises one or more  
5 projections that facilitate securing a floor panel to the  
lower panel.

22. The vehicle floor system of Claim 13,  
wherein the lower panels of the hinge members are  
substantially coplanar when the first and second hinge  
members are both in the first position.

23. The vehicle floor system of Claim 13,  
wherein the upper panel of each hinge member comprises a  
tapered free end.

24. The vehicle floor system of Claim 19,  
wherein the lower panel of each hinge member comprises a  
tapered free end.

25. The vehicle floor system of Claim 13,  
wherein each hinge member is pivotally attached to a  
bridge member edge portion via a web of material having a  
thickness of less than about 1 millimeter (mm).

26. The vehicle floor system of Claim 19,  
wherein each hinge member is pivotally attached to a  
bridge member edge portion via a web of material having a  
thickness of less than about 1 millimeter (mm).

27. The vehicle floor system of Claim 13,  
wherein the upper panel of each hinge member is  
substantially coplanar with the bridge member when in the  
first position, and wherein the upper panel of each hinge

- 5 member is transverse to the bridge member when in the second position.